United Nations S/2005/553

Security Council

Distr.: General
30 August 2005

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on Ethiopia and Eritrea

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 1320 (2000) of 15 September 2000, and provides an update on the peace process since my report dated 20 June 2005 (S/2005/400). The report also describes the activities of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the current mandate of which expires on 15 September 2005.

II. Status of the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas and cooperation with the parties

2. During the reporting period, UNMEE continued to effectively carry out its mandated tasks of observing, monitoring and reporting on activities in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas. Notwithstanding a few incidents, the situation in the Temporary Security Zone and the adjacent areas remained generally calm and stable. The Ethiopian Armed Forces maintained their forward positions, which they continue to characterize as defensive, 25 to 40 kilometres from the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone. On the Eritrean side, no major movement or redeployment of troops was observed, except for some training activities in areas distant from the Zone.

3. There was also no major change in the number of cross-border incidents which, in most cases, involved cattle-rustling or persons straying across the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone. Compared to the previous period, there was a slight decline in incidents of violence related to those cases. UNMEE continues to monitor the situation closely and apply proactive preventive measures. This was primarily achieved through extensive patrolling, direct interventions to resolve various incidents relating to border crossing, cattle-rustling or abductions, liaison with the parties and other confidence-building measures.

4. In sum, thanks to the cooperation of the parties and the extensive activity of UNMEE, the integrity of the Temporary Security Zone was generally maintained. However, as I noted in my previous report, the lack of progress towards resolving the fundamental stalemate poses a threat to military stability.

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Freedom of movement

5. As a result of an improved climate of cooperation between UNMEE and the two parties on the ground during the reporting period, there has been a decline in the restrictions placed by Eritrea and Ethiopia on the freedom of movement of UNMEE in the discharge of its mandated tasks. Despite my appeals to the Government of Eritrea, however, the vital road from Asmara to Barentu, via Keren, has remained closed to UNMEE traffic, and there is no indication that it could be reopened in the near future. I therefore reiterate my strong appeal to the Government of Eritrea to review its decision and to reopen this route, which is so important for the supply of United Nations troops. On the Ethiopian side, the Mission encountered some restrictions on freedom of movement in Subsector East. I similarly appeal to the Government of Ethiopia to lift these restrictions.

6. As mentioned in my previous report, severe restrictions imposed by the Eritrean authorities on UNMEE military police in Asmara continued in spite of the Mission's protests, which went unheeded. Further efforts by United Nations Headquarters and the Mission have not succeeded in resolving the stand-off with the Government of Eritrea to enable the Italian contingent to resume its activities.

7. In view of those complications, the Government of Italy decided to withdraw its military police contingent in July 2005, after about five years of service with UNMEE. The military police activities will be taken over by Kenyan military police, who will deploy as early as possible. I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Italy for its generous contribution to the United Nations peacekeeping efforts in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and to express my appreciation to the Government of Kenya for enhancing its existing participation in the Mission.

8. With regard to the issue of a direct flight route between Asmara and Addis Ababa, I regret to report that UNMEE aircraft must continue to fly via a third country. Though the Government of Ethiopia had agreed to allow United Nations aircraft to fly directly from Addis Ababa to Asmara, as Eritrea had previously insisted upon, UNMEE has still not received any positive response from the authorities in Asmara. I appeal to the Government of Eritrea to address the matter urgently, for the sake of safety and economy in UNMEE operations.

Military Coordination Commission

9. During the reporting period, the Military Coordination Commission held its thirty-first meeting at Nairobi on 16 July 2005. At the meeting, the Eritrean and Ethiopian delegates discussed the current military situation and reviewed with UNMEE the functioning of the sector military coordination commissions. The two parties reiterated their willingness to cooperate fully with UNMEE in an effort to resolve outstanding issues relating to the maintenance of the Temporary Security Zone. Both sides agreed on the importance of maintaining peace along the southern boundary of the Zone, among other things to enable farmers to undertake agricultural activities. The delegates held the discussions in a cordial and constructive atmosphere.

Status of the Mission and related issues

10. As at 6 August 2005, the total strength of the UNMEE military component stood at 3,292, comprising 3,001 troops, 77 headquarters staff and 214 military observers (see annex).

11. As I indicated in my previous report, the redeployment of troops of the Ethiopian Armed Forces and their continued presence closer to the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone, coupled with the underlying tension in the area, have generated a need for greater surveillance and observation along the border. In the present circumstances, UNMEE believes that a reconfiguration of its military component would be required, which could be achieved within the overall existing authorized strength. This would include a reconstitution of a force reserve company of 50 troops, and a modest increase in the observation capacity, by 10 additional military observers. These arrangements should be complemented by an increase in the flying hours of the two existing military helicopters, for the purpose of air reconnaissance, in addition to their current operational activities.

12. UNMEE personnel are facing the consequences of mounting economic hardships in Eritrea, including periodic shortages of essential commodities.

III. Boundary Commission

13. As indicated in my previous report, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission has suspended its activities in the area. There has, accordingly, been no further demarcation activity.

IV. Mine action

14. Landmines and unexploded ordnance remained a major threat to the people living and working in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas, hindering the return to normality of the affected people in both countries. From June to August 2005, there were a few incidents of unexploded ordnance inside the Zone. Three of the incidents occurred in Sector West, and two occurred in Sector Centre, killing one child and injuring a total of four persons. In my last report, I informed the Council about mines that had been newly laid on certain roads in the adjacent areas of Sector West, on the Ethiopian side. I am pleased to report that there were no such occurrences during the period covered by the present report.

15. Consistent with the Mission's mandate, the UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre ensured the implementation of a well-coordinated United Nations mine action response in the Mission area. From June to mid-August 2005, the UNMEE force demining assets, together with the commercial contractors for route clearance and integrated demining operations, destroyed 10 mines and 285 pieces of unexploded ordnance, in addition to clearing 1,079,195 square metres of land and 574 kilometres of road. The UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre continues to monitor closely the threat of landmines and unexploded ordnance in all sectors.

16. The Kenyan military deminers in UNMEE continued to train and work with the commercial contractors to implement an integrated approach to demining

operations inside the Temporary Security Zone. Both training and clearance operations progressed well, resulting in increased productivity. The focus of integrated demining operations is on minefields in the Shilalo region of Eritrea, in Sector West.

17. The mine risk education field teams of the UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre focused their community-based outreach activities on internally displaced persons who were returning to the Shilalo region in Sector West. This is in accordance with priorities established in collaboration with the Eritrean authorities. The teams provided mine risk education to 1,978 people.

V. Human rights

18. UNMEE continued to monitor and follow up cases of cross-border incidents that included alleged abductions and missing persons from both Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well cattle-rustling incidents, especially in the area of Badme. I am encouraged by the cooperation that the Mission received from both parties in resolving these issues.

19. During the reporting period, UNMEE monitored the repatriation of 298 persons of Ethiopian origin and 163 persons of Eritrean origin, under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross. I received with concern reports from both countries of discrimination on the grounds of nationality, and of difficulties in accessing public social services, against each other's nationals. I appeal to the parties to ensure that repatriations remain voluntary and that they are conducted in a proper and dignified manner.

20. UNMEE visited Shimelba refugee camp in northern Ethiopia, which hosted 9,327 refugees as of July 2005. Although much remains to be done, international agencies have made commendable efforts in responding to the needs of the refugees for food, water, sanitation, health and education. Furthermore, I welcome the ongoing resettlement programmes. I have noted however, that most refugees consider the resettlement process too slow.

21. UNMEE has continued with its technical cooperation activities in Ethiopia, which helps build capacity for dealing with human rights issues. The Mission also undertook a number of human rights training projects for law enforcement officials, civil society organizations and national human rights institutions in Ethiopia. As I noted in my last report, UNMEE is ready to carry out similar activities in Eritrea. I therefore, once again, invite the Eritrean authorities to assist UNMEE in extending its technical cooperation in human rights work in the country.

VI. Public information

22. UNMEE continued with its public information activities through weekly radio broadcasts, video features, a monthly newsletter, weekly press briefings and outreach centre presentations. A recent radio audience survey conducted in Ethiopia revealed that the impact remains modest, however, as a number of people lack direct access to the airwaves in the country. The Mission is currently conducting a similar survey in Eritrea. I regret to report that in Eritrea cooperation between the

Government media and the Mission is highly restricted. This is compounded by a growing reticence among the authorities regarding events organized by UNMEE.

23. The UNMEE outreach centres in Addis Ababa, Adigrat and Mekelle, on the Ethiopian side, remained active, as they registered a growing number of group visits. In the run-up to the general elections in Ethiopia, the centres witnessed increased visits by people seeking information on human rights and conflict management. The centres have successfully reached out to communities in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas, where they presented documentaries and distributed publications that promote the culture of peace. The response from the communities is encouraging.

VII. Humanitarian developments

24. In Eritrea, widespread food insecurity continues to be the main humanitarian challenge. The food aid situation remains precarious, with gaps in distribution and mounting malnutrition in the country. Given an increase in the number of planted areas in relation to last year, and considering regional climate trends, the Government of Eritrea expects improved yields of about 350,000 tons, a 235 per cent increase over last year, which still represents only 45 per cent of overall consumption needs in the country. Many farmers lack the basic resources, including seeds, fertilizers and tools, to benefit fully from the improved rains.

25. Certain parts of the country, primarily the central and north-eastern regions, have recently shown extremely high levels of child malnutrition. Pockets in the south-west also show extremely high seasonal malnutrition at this time. Heightened urban food insecurity, due to inflation and commodity shortages, has also been reported.

26. The Government has recently clarified a new framework for working with non-governmental organizations, ensuring that no taxes will be levied on incoming humanitarian goods, including food aid. Some other constraints involving delays in the registration of non-governmental organizations, and the freezing of certain project activities and their vehicles, have started to hamper some humanitarian activities, but negotiations have been initiated by the United Nations to resolve these issues.

27. In Ethiopia, malnutrition has increased in certain parts of the country. The rise in the number of vulnerable persons from 3.1 million to 3.8 million, as reassessed in May 2005, created an additional need for 66,198 tons of food aid. This has brought the total food requirement to 464,385 tons. From August to December, about 3.3 million people will continue to require emergency relief. While resources for emergency food needs for the remainder of the year have already been met, the response to the non-food sector remains a concern. Additional resources for the health, water and sanitation, and agricultural sectors are urgently needed to complement the significant food aid contributions that have been made.

28. Significant delays in the implementation of the Productive Safety Net Programme continue to plague the country's food security efforts, which aim to reach more than 5 million people living in the most chronically food-insecure districts throughout the country. The Government initiated a number of measures, including a one-time cash payment to beneficiaries, equivalent to at least three

months' entitlement, regardless of whether work for the period had been undertaken or completed. A switch from cash to food transfers was made in a significant number of districts where cash transfers were most problematic. The United Nations country team is monitoring closely the humanitarian consequences of the implementation of those measures.

29. Meanwhile, the Enhanced Outreach Strategy for Child Survival, which targets approximately 7.5 million children with nutrition screening, vitamin A supplements, immunization and supplementary feeding, has already covered 246 of the 325 planned administrative districts. The programme was initiated at a time of growing concern over alarming malnutrition rates identified in numerous food-insecure areas of the country.

30. I am still concerned by the conflict between Somali and Oromia groups along the boundary of the two regions, resulting from the general referendums on local administrative jurisdiction of subdistricts, or *kebeles*, in the Somali and Oromia regions. The displacement of people, which initially occurred in December 2004 and January 2005, has happened again during July and August 2005.

Quick-impact projects

31. UNMEE continued to implement quick-impact projects in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas, in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, from funds received through the Trust Fund to Support the Peace Process in Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Governments of Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway have contributed generously to the Trust Fund. The total of all financial contributions since 2001 has risen to US$ 1.2 million. I encourage donors to continue lending support to these important, small-scale projects by making additional contributions to the Trust Fund.

Conduct of United Nations personnel

32. At a meeting on sexual exploitation and abuse held by the United Nations system in Addis Ababa on 11 July 2005, participants established a network of focal points for addressing the issue.

33. Basic training on sexual exploitation and abuse continued during the period under review. At the end of July, about 1,500 UNMEE civilian and military personnel were trained in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in the Mission area. In addition, 12 military and 9 civilian personnel participated in a three-day training of trainers session on the subject.

HIV/AIDS activities

34. The UNMEE HIV/AIDS unit continued to conduct induction training for new arrivals to the Mission area. The training has been redesigned to include additional issues such as sexual exploitation and abuse, gender and human rights, cultural sensitivity and HIV/AIDS in the workplace.

35. In addition to providing voluntary counselling and testing services to new arrivals, the UNMEE HIV/AIDS unit has assisted in the preparation of training courses for the HIV/AIDS learning facilitators in Eritrea. The unit also continues to offer assistance to other United Nations agencies on technical matters related to HIV/AIDS and to collaborate with UNAIDS in Eritrea.

VIII. Financial aspects

36. The General Assembly, by its resolution 59/303 of 22 June 2005 appropriated the amount of $185,993,300 (gross), equivalent to $15,499,441 per month, for UNMEE for the financial period from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006. The assessment of those amounts is subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Mission. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNMEE beyond 15 September 2005, the cost of maintaining the Mission until 30 June 2006 would be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly. As at 31 July 2005, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNMEE amounted to $48.1 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $2,624 million.

IX. Observations

37. I am pleased to note that there was some decline in the number of incidents in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas during the reporting period. I therefore commend the parties for safeguarding the integrity of the Temporary Security Zone and for their continuing commitment to the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, signed in Algiers on 18 June 2000.

38. As I observed in my last report, however, the protracted stalemate is inherently destabilizing. I therefore reiterate my strong appeal to the witnesses to the Algiers Agreements, especially those that have influence on the parties, to play a more concerted role in assisting the two countries to resolve the stalemate. I also renew my suggestion that the Security Council examine the appropriate timing and substance of a mission that it could undertake to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

39. As the Council will recall from my report of 16 December 2004 (S/2004/973 and Corr.1), I welcomed any step that could lead to the full implementation of the Algiers Agreement of December 2000 and the subsequent decision of the Boundary Commission. I call on the parties to live up to that Agreement, particularly its article 4, paragraph 15, in which it is stated that the delimitation and demarcation determinations of the Boundary Commission shall be final and binding.

40. In my last report, I noted that the absence of dialogue between Ethiopia and Eritrea continues to be a missing element of the peace process. I wish to re-emphasize the importance of dialogue without any precondition between the parties as an integral part of ongoing efforts to resolve the existing stalemate and any other bilateral issue. I would like to call on the international community to spare no effort in bringing the parties together to engage in constructive dialogue aimed at moving the peace process forward and normalizing bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

41. Once again, I reiterate that the Governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea have the primary responsibility to bring durable peace and security between their two countries. This is a responsibility of the Governments to their own peoples. The international community is ready to assist them in that endeavour.

42. I recommend that the mandate of UNMEE be extended for a further six months, until 15 March 2006, and that the authorized number of the military observers be increased by 10, to a total of 230, within the overall existing authorized

strength of 3,404 military personnel. Given the progress made in integrating demining operations in the Mission area, and in view of the difficulties facing the Eritrean national demining programme, as well as the fact that demining support to the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission remains on hold, I also recommend that UNMEE assist the parties in continuing cooperation with other international partners in the mine action sector, by providing humanitarian demining assistance in and around the Temporary Security Zone, technical advice and coordination.

43. In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, and to the UNMEE civilian and military personnel, for their continued commitment and hard work. I would also like to commend my Special Envoy, Lloyd Axworthy, for his many efforts to help the two parties reach an understanding on the way forward. I would further like to thank all the Mission's partners, including the United Nations country teams and other humanitarian agencies, individual Member States, the African Union and other international organizations for the support they continue to lend to the peace process.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea: contributions as at 6 August 2005

Country	*Military observers*	*Troops*	*Staff*	*Total*	*National support elements*
Algeria	8			8	
Austria	2		1	3	
Bangladesh	7	168	6	181	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9			9	
Bulgaria	5		2	7	
China	6			6	
Croatia	7			7	
Czech Republic	2			2	
Denmark	4			4	
Finland	7			7	
France			1	1	
ambia	4			4	
ermany	2			2	
hana	12		4	16	
reece	3			3	
India	8	1 534	22	1 564	
Iran, Islamic Republic of	3			3	
Italy			1	1	2
Jordan	7	951	11	969	
Kenya	10	315	11	336	
Malaysia	7		3	10	
Namibia	4		1	5	
Nepal	5			5	
Nigeria	7		3	10	
Norway	5			5	
Paraguay	3			3	
Peru	3			3	
Poland	6			6	
Romania	7			7	
Russian Federation	6			6	
South Africa	4			4	
Spain	3		1	4	
Sweden	5			5	
Switzerland	3			3	
Tunisia	2		3	5	

Country	*Military observers*	*Troops*	*Staff*	*Total*	*National support elements*
Ukraine	7			7	
United Republic of Tanzania	8		2	10	
Uruguay	5	33	3	41	
United States of America	7			7	
Zambia	10		3	13	
Total	**214**	**3 001**	**77**	**3 292**	**2**